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# OBSERVATIONS

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ON THE

# IMPORTANCE OF

# NATIONAL MANUFACTURES;

And particularly on the

# LINEN MANUFACTURE.

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# OBSERVATIONS, &c.

INDUSTRY is the great ſource of national wealth and proſperity. Deſtitute of this ſource, no nation can riſe to a diſtinguiſhed degree of power or preeminence; becauſe no ſpecies of wealth can ſupply the place of induſtry, or produce the ſame happy effects to ſociety.

Let us ſuppoſe two nations, in ſimilar circumſtances, with regard to ſituation, climate, &c.; that their numbers were equal, and an equal revenue neceſſary for the ſupport of each; but, that the one owed its ſupport to the induſtry and activity of its people, while the other was ſupported from the produce of gold mines, or any other adventitious circumſtance, unconnected with national induſtry. In the firſt ſtate, wealth would be more equally diffuſed, the mutual intereſts, wants, and neceſſities

ceſſities of the people would give riſe to laws and regulations friendly to liberty, to the arts and ſciences, and to every thing that is ornamental, or beneficial to mankind. In the other, (unleſs we can ſuppoſe a romantic policy, of which the world never afforded an example), we muſt foreſee, that the wealth of the nation would ſoon fall into the hands of ambitious and powerful individuals, who might wallow in riches and luxury, while the great body of the people would experience every degree of tyranny and oppreſſion.

In compariſon with other nations, the firſt would be powerful and reſpectable, the other weak and contemptible. If ſuch is the caſe, (which the leaſt knowledge of mankind fully evinces), every ſtate is bound, by the ſtrongeſt ties of duty and intereſt, to encourage and promote the induſtry of its people.

England has afforded an illuſtrious example of this policy, and ſhown its happy effects. When we look into the map of the world, and obſerve what an inconſiderable

rable part the Britiſh iſles occupy, how ſmall the numbers of their inhabitants are, when compared with the vaſt multitudes which are ſpread over the earth, we cannot but wonder at the very exalted ſtation they have ſo long maintained.

This ſuperiority can be attributed only to that ſpirit of induſtry which Britain has ſo remarkably diſplayed, and which may be ſaid to have given birth to her excellent conſtitution.

Her induſtry has filled her dominions with people, and her people with riches. Theſe, again, have not only defended her againſt the power of rival nations, but have enabled her to gain a dominion, more wonderful and extenſive than any other nation in modern times.

To ſay that Great Britain has already attained her meridian grandeur, and that in time ſhe will ſink to the common level of other nations, is the language of a mean and grovelling ſpirit. Surely, it is not the duty or intereſt of her people to entertain ſuch ſentiments: Nothing could have a

greater

greater tendency to accelerate her ruin; while, on the contrary, by an unremitting attention to the ſame cauſes to which ſhe owes her advancement and ſuperiority, ſhe may long preſerve them. But even, if the riſing powers of other nations ſhould abridge her foreign dominions, ſtill ſhe would continue a great, reſpectable, and happy nation, while ſhe remained induſtrious and active, and poſſeſſed within herſelf the means of her own ſupport.

As the manufactures of all the world are but equal to the conſumption of all the people in the world, it may be ſaid of thoſe of every individual nation, that their own wants and neceſſities afford an ample field, ſufficient for the exertion of their own induſtry.

In ſtates which are more induſtrious than others, a very different mode of living prevails; neceſſity is not the only ſpring to induſtry; riches create new wants; and the purſuit of what may be termed the comforts, elegancies, or luxuries of life, open

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an increaſed and unbounded field for the induſtry of the people.

To put this argument in a more ſtriking point of view, let us imagine a nation, ſo fortunately circumſtanced, that ſhe poſſeſſed within herſelf every production, natural or artificial, which the world affords. In theſe reſpects, ſhe would undoubtedly be the happieſt nation on the face of the earth. Her own induſtry alone would be requiſite to procure her the full poſſeſſion of all thoſe objects which are the conſtant purſuit of mankind, and which are not to be obtained at preſent, without exploring the fartheſt corners of the world, at the expence of much blood and treaſure.

But, though no country ever enjoyed ſuch unlimited advantages; yet ſurely that nation which can beſt ſupply its local defects, muſt be proportionally happy and proſperous: And proſperity and happineſs can be attained only by the exertions of induſtry; for theſe leſſen her wants, promote her independence, and afford her a

ſpecies

ſpecies of ſtrength and wealth, of which ſhe cannot eaſily be deprived.

It may, therefore, be laid down as an axiom, that the firſt care of every nation ought to be, to encourage domeſtic induſtry, to promote her own trade and manufactures, and, as far as poſſible, to ſupply all her wants. Our forefathers do not ſeem to have been regardleſs of this policy. England had no ſooner emerged from the ignorance of former ages, than ſhe beſtowed the moſt unremitting attention to the eſtabliſhment and ſupport of her manufactures. Innumerable laws and regulations were enacted, from day to day, for their promotion; bounties were granted on infant manufactures; and a reſtriction of the importation and conſumpt of foreign articles, kept an uniform pace with the advancement of her own induſtry.

To ſuch policy England is indebted for the valuable manufactures of wool, of iron, of ſilk, &c. And, to the eſtabliſhment of theſe manufactures, ſhe owes that flow of wealth which exalts her above other nations,

tions, the comfortable and happy ſubſiſtence of one half of her people, and an extraordinary population, which ſupplies her with formidable fleets and armies, and enables her to ſend colonies to all the quarters of the globe.

England is much farther advanced in manufactures, and improvements of every kind, than either Ireland or Scotland; and there is no doubt, if the ſame ſpirit of induſtry was introduced into theſe parts of the Britiſh empire, it would greatly add to the ſtrength, wealth, and happineſs of the whole.

That ſome nations are leſs induſtrious than others, is very diſcernible; but, to affirm that there is any invincible reaſon for this, depending on the conſtitution or temper of the people, is abſurd; for, in all climates and ſituations, we find the people inhabiting the ſame ſpot, at ſome periods indolent, at others induſtrious; therefore, the true ſpring of induſtry and enterprize, ariſes from favourable circumſtances in a

ſtate. Theſe tend to encourage labour and exertion, and gradually to diſpel indolence and inactivity.

The happy conſtitution of a ſtate, which guards the liberty of the ſubject, ſecures private property, and makes the protection of trade and commerce the object of her laws, conſtitutes the evident cauſes of induſtry.

England, Scotland, and Ireland, ſeem to have been deſigned by Heaven to compoſe one empire; and their union is beneficial to the whole.

England, as poſſeſſing more ſtrength and wealth, is an acquiſition of great value to the other two; while ſhe, in her turn, has procured from them a vaſt addition to her territory, to her ſtrength, and to the numbers of her people; without which, it cannot be ſuppoſed that ſhe would have been able to raiſe ſuch fleets and armies as were neceſſary for her defence. In this point of view, the union of the three kingdoms is equally favourable to all. But it is far from having proved ſo in many reſpects.

Though

Though England was much farther advanced in manufactures and improvements than Scotland or Ireland; yet (as it is to be taken for granted there is no natural bar or impediment in either country for their advancement in theſe particulars), there is good reaſon to conclude, that the ſame cauſes which brought about that fortunate change in England, would, in time, have produced the ſame effects in Ireland and Scotland. Experience, however, has ſhown the contrary.

The Iriſh and Scots make but ſmall advances in manufacture; the people are poor and neceſſitous; they are ever diſpoſed to wander from home, and ſeek that ſubſiſtence in other countries which their own denies. The emigrations from Scotland and Ireland have been exceſſive, as well as the numbers that have been drawn into the army and navy, and every where preſent the melancholy proſpect of a ruined and depopulated country.

It is ſaid, that ſufficient numbers ſtill remain for all the purpoſes of agriculture and manufacture.

manufacture. This indeed is true; but proceeds not from the abundance of men, but from the want of employment for them.

The reaſon why Scotland and Ireland have made no greater advances in trade and manufacture, is fully to be accounted for from their connection with England.

That country had got the ſtart of them greatly in every manufacture; and, from her ſuperior wealth, had attained great advantages over them. The aſcendant obtained over Ireland, and the union with Scotland, opened their ports for Engliſh manufactures; and, while it proved an advantage of the laſt conſequence to England, by opening a market more uniform and extenſive than all the reſt of the world beſide, it proved the ruin of Scots and Iriſh manufactures, and ſtill hangs a millſtone about the neck of induſtry, which, if not removed, will, in time, prove deſtructive to theſe parts of the Britiſh empire, and ultimately to England herſelf.

This

This concluſion may not appear abſolutely neceſſary. It may be ſuppoſed, that, though Ireland and Scotland were even to remain in their preſent ſtate, if they did not decline, they would ſtill anſwer all the purpoſes for which they are at preſent uſeful; and the empire in general would be in no worſe ſituation than it is now.

This ſuppoſition would deſerve ſome attention, if the alteration of times and circumſtances had not produced wonderful changes in both countries. The Scots and Iriſh, though far ſhort of their neighbours in wealth and induſtry, are faſt approaching to their mode of living: By intercourſe with them, they have adopted their manners, and acquired a taſte, not only for the comforts, but for the elegancies and luxuries of the Engliſh.

In theſe kingdoms, there is a conſtant demand for Engliſh manufactures and articles of trade; and their own exports being inſufficient to pay their imports, their caſh is diminiſhed, paper-money is circulated to an enormous extent, the rents are racked,

racked, the people oppreſſed, and bankruptcies increaſed an hundred fold. This preſents ſcenes of diſtreſs, unknown and unfelt before, and, if permitted to go on, will become abſolutely intolerable.

The cure for this evil is to diminiſh the imports and increaſe the exports. But, how is this to be effected, while Engliſh manufactures find free admiſſion into the markets of Ireland and Scotland, and which cannot be ſhut out while their connection with England remains? The public ſpirit and patriotiſm of individuals, to raiſe manufactures, under ſo great diſadvantages, is of no avail; the great tide of Engliſh manufactures, already well eſtabliſhed, and brought to perfection, will for ever bear down any attempts of that kind.

To thoſe who are ſtrangers to the introduction of a new manufacture, it will not appear half ſo arduous an undertaking as experience proves it to be.

It may be argued, that there are no ſecrets in the mode of carrying on the principal manufactures of England; that

Engliſh

Engliſh artiſts may be procured to introduce new manufactures, and that the Scots and Iriſh have advantages in the cheapneſs of labour, &c.

This reaſoning may appear plauſible; but the experience of former times proves, that it is greatly overbalanced by other conſiderations.

Engliſh artiſts may be procured; but their ſkill and dexterity cannot be immediately infuſed into the various workmen employed by them. The ſlowneſs of execution is more than a counterbalance to the cheapneſs of labour, and the imperfection of their firſt attempts brings their manufactures into ſpeedy diſgrace. The merchants attempt to ſell them, and diſoblige their cuſtomers; the manufacturer ſoon finds his capital and credit exhauſted in an unſaleable commodity; heavy loſſes are ſuſtained; the adventurers are diſcouraged; and their patriotiſm is ſoon exſtinguiſhed by their intereſt.

If

If the Scots and Iriſh were independent of the Engliſh, and could ſhut out her manufactures, while they introduced their own, the caſe would be exceedingly different. Secured in the home-market, the manufacture would riſe, ſkill and dexterity would be acquired, which in time would enable them to rival even the Engliſh *. An excluſion of the manufactures of England is, however, impoſſible, without diſſolving a connection, which ought to be the warmeſt wiſh and endeavour of every good man to preſerve to the lateſt poſterity.

The Iriſh have felt their diſtreſſes; and, with a view to relief, have petitioned for a free trade. This it would undoubtedly be of

* Ireland poſſeſſes ſome advantages over Scotland in the facility with which ſhe might introduce new manufactures. Being an independent nation, and enjoying a parliament of her own, bounties and other encouragements may be granted by themſelves.

Theſe would operate to the diſadvantage of the manufactures eſtabliſhed in England, which an extenſion of the linen would be the moſt effectual means of preventing.

of conſequence for them to obtain; the liberty of exporting their own products to any market, the privilege of ſupplying themſelves with the manufactures of all countries, without reſtraint, would prove a conſiderable benefit. It might increaſe their ſhipping, their trade, and raiſe the value of their lands by a greater exportation of *natural* products; but would be far ſhort of anſwering the happy purpoſes expected by the Iriſh; while deſtitute of manufacture, their trade would be confined to the mere employment of *carrying*, and the export of natural products, which is the leaſt beneficial to a nation, as it reſembles the gold mines formerly mentioned, affords no room for induſtry, and does not promote the wealth and happineſs of the people at large.

Manufactures are the precious ſprings of trade and commerce. How to make thoſe ſprings flow copiouſly, is a queſtion of the greateſt national moment. If, under the idea of a free trade on the part of

Ireland, Engliſh manufactures were not to be excluded, their own, in ſimilar branches, can never be expected to flouriſh. Yet, if with a view to relief, Engliſh manufactures are to be excluded, (an idea which ought never to be entertained), that ſacred connection, ſo neceſſary to the proſperity of both kingdoms, would be totally diſſolved.

To preſerve the manufactures of England, to promote thoſe already eſtabliſhed in Ireland and Scotland, and to encourage new ones, which might not interfere with England, would be the happieſt, and is the moſt rational plan, for removing theſe apparent difficulties, for healing all differences, and for giving new ſtrength and vigour to the whole.

Few individuals are capable of forming a plan, by which ſo important and extenſive a purpoſe is to be obtained. But, if the idea was once adopted, and men of all profeſſions invited and encouraged, to point out in what branches the Scots and Iriſh might be uſefully employed, there is little

little reaſon to doubt, but ample fields for improvement, preſently unthought of, might open to their view. The imports of foreign commodities to Britain are immenſe; the wants of other nations are boundleſs; and, by a ſtrict attention to theſe, a ſubſtitution for many foreign articles might be invented, and eſtabliſhed at home.

Such a reſearch would give riſe to many new projects and intereſting ſchemes; at the ſame time, it would require much ſkill and judgment, to diſtinguiſh the ſolid from the unſubſtantial and airy; a difficulty which by no means ought to be an obſtacle to the attempt. No ſuch difficulty, however, attends the farther encouraging and extending thoſe manufactures, already in part eſtabliſhed, in Ireland and Scotland, and for which theſe countries have given evidence, that they are in every reſpect well adapted.

Of theſe, the moſt conſiderable and important is the linen, and which highly merits particular attention.

Of

Of all the manufactures of Europe, none is more generally known and carried on than the linen.

Every country poſſeſſes the materials for it; and, as it requires but a moderate degree of ſkill, it is every where eſtabliſhed.

The diſadvantages under which it has conſtantly laboured in England, from the interference of a foreign manufacture, (to which no other manufacture is expoſed), has however rendered it but an unprofitable branch in that country, where more beneficial employments abound.—And for this reaſon, the Engliſh, though they have always had a conſiderable domeſtic linen manufacture, in ſome branches, have never found it their intereſt to ſupply themſelves altogether with linen, nor thought of making it an article of export. On the contrary, till the introduction of it in Scotland and Ireland, they were chiefly ſupplied by a foreign importation.

Next to the woollens, however, the linen is the moſt extenſive manufacture in Europe; and, though not ſo profitable to the merchants

merchants or manufacturers, is of the higheſt conſequence, and proves the greateſt bleſſing to the poor of every country where it is eſtabliſhed. The price of labour, in the linen manufacture, almoſt conſtitutes its whole value. The number of men employed in it, though conſiderable, bears a ſmall proportion to the women and children.

Theſe, without interruption to their houſehold affairs, can, at all their vacant hours, be employed in ſpinning, winding, &c.; and, whatever may be the employment of the men, their wives and daughters are almoſt all employed in the linen manufacture, wherever it is carried on.

The importance of this manufacture led our forefathers to wiſh the eſtabliſhment of it in Ireland and Scotland.

About the beginning of this century, the extenſion and promotion of it became a favourite object, to which they were ſtimulated, by the double motive of providing employment for their own people, and ſaving to the nation immenſe ſums of

money,

money, annually paid to foreign nations for linen. Public ſocieties were formed as guardians of the manufacture, and many wholeſome laws and regulations were framed for its advancement. The care of the public has not been thrown away. The linen, once trifling in Ireland and Scotland, has gradually ariſen to great magnitude, and is become the ſtaple of both kingdoms. It is the fund from which they chiefly pay their extenſive imports from England, and is of ſuch conſequence to them, that, if they were deprived of it, they would ſoon be reduced to the greateſt diſtreſs.

In the moſt flouriſhing years of the linen manufacture, the imports of it from Ireland to England, amounted to 25 millions of yards; and the quantity ſtamped in Scotland, (which is chiefly exported) amounted to 15 millions; and, ſuppoſing 10 millions more are retained by the two countries for their own conſumption, the whole extent of the linen manufacture in both kingdoms, would amount to 50 millions of yards, which, valued at one ſhilling

ling a yard, would be worth L. 2,500,000. And, ſetting apart one fifth as the price of materials, there would remain L. 2,000,000 Sterling, as the price of labour to the poor: Or, in other words, as it is well known the poor people in Scotland and Ireland (including men, women, and children) are annually maintained for leſs than L. 3 each, the above ſum would give bread to near 700,000 people, or almoſt one fourth part of all the inhabitants of Ireland and Scotland.

The importance of this manufacture is, therefore, ſufficiently ſtriking; and it is matter of great aſtoniſhment, that it is not only *ſtill* allowed to ſtruggle with the moſt formidable difficulties, which threaten its diſſolution, but that, amongſt all the plans which have been ſuggeſted for the relief of Ireland, government have not caſt their eye on the moſt obvious of any, which would be equally advantageous to Scotland, and nowiſe prejudicial to England.

The Scots and Iriſh are languiſhing for want of employment, while their ſtaple manufacture

manufacture has not yet acquired much above half the extent of which it is capable. The foreign linens annually imported into England are nearly equal to the imports from Ireland and Scotland. An excluſion of foreign linens would give an amazing additional field for the induſtry of both nations, and might, in time, be carried to ſuch an extent as to afford them full employment. This ſeems to deſerve conſideration.

The fine linens in which the Scots and Iriſh have made the greateſt progreſs, were once all imported from Holland. From ſome political motives, theſe fine linens were ſubjected to a much higher duty, (no leſs than fifteen pence *per* ell), than almoſt any other ſpecies of foreign linen. This operated as a prohibition on Dutch hollands, gave the trade to Ireland and Scotland, and produced a very unexpected and happy effect.

The Scots and Iriſh, in a few years, not only ſupplied the whole conſumption, but they brought their manufacture to ſuch perfection,

perfection, that they even ſurpaſſed the Dutch; and the nation is now better and more cheaply ſupplied than ever they were formerly. The conſequence is, that the manufacture of that article in Holland is almoſt annihilated.

England, by taking ſuch quantities of foreign linen, is the greateſt ſupport and prop to that manufacture in foreign countries; and, if ſhe was to withdraw her countenance from them, and transfer it to the home-manufacture, it would flouriſh, while the other would decline.

The ſame advantages which followed the introduction of the fine, would, in time, follow that of the coarſe linen; and there is great reaſon to believe, that the linen manufacture, at preſent far ſhort of our domeſtic conſumption, might become a great article of export, adequate to all the induſtry of the Scots and Iriſh, for many ages to come. This is the more probable, when we think of what is likely to be the ſtate of America ſome time hence.

The Americans, at preſent our foes, muſt, in time, be reconciled to us in ſome manner or other. The Britiſh and Iriſh have the advantages of old connections, which will not ſoon be effaced, and will give them the preference to other nations. The increaſed population of America may open an extenſive market for that manufacture, which may one day render it as important, and the ſource of as much wealth to Ireland and Scotland, as the woollen manufacture to England.

To the linen manufacture alone, we do not argue that all our attention and our hopes ſhould be directed; every exertion ſhould be made to introduce others. We only affirm, that it is abſurd, that the moſt natural manufacture of the country ſhould be totally overlooked and neglected.

A prohibition of foreign linens all at once, would be injudicious. But an additional duty of 10 or 15 *per cent.* on the preſent rates, would prove a great encouragement, give immediate relief, and extend the Iriſh and Scots manufactures.

Theſe,

Theſe, like all ſuch eſtabliſhed in England, ought to be ſecured by a prohibition of the rival manufactures, as ſoon as there is a fair proſpect of their being able to ſupply the conſumption. For ſuch is the variety of the linen manufacture, that, while the foreign is admiſſible into our ports, the importers will always find means to elude a great part of the duties payable; by changing their denominations, lengths, breadths, &c. and thus will for ever prove a thorn in the ſide of our home-manufacture.

The interpoſition of legiſlature is, however, not only requiſite, with a view to the further advancement of the linen trade in Ireland and Scotland, but alſo to preſerve it from a decline.

The fine linen trade is too narrow a field for the induſtry of both nations, and is already over-done. The Scots and Iriſh have attempted other fabrics, and made conſiderable progreſs in them. To their ſucceſs in theſe, they were, however, chiefly indebted to the late war in Germany, which

which interrupted the manufacture of their rivals, and enhanced the price.

These were reſtored with the peace; and their renewed interference, in the Engliſh market, has thrown the Scots and Iriſh into the greateſt diſtreſs, and preſents them with the melancholy proſpect of treading back the ground they had already gained, while they had a view of making ſtill farther advancement.

A few years ago, the Scots and Iriſh made application to parliament in behalf of their ſtaple trade. The Britiſh and Iriſh Houſes of Commons were many months employed in inquiring into the ſtate of that manufacture.

Its great extent and importance were fully proved, and its diſtreſſed ſituation admitted by all parties. The importers of foreign linen, (a wealthy body), whoſe intereſt is diametrically oppoſite to that of the home-manufacturer, found means to defeat the application. They induſtriouſly alarmed the manufacturers of England, (of all men in the world the moſt jealous), by perſuading

perſuading them, that, if additional duties were laid on foreign linens, foreign ſtates would retaliate, and lay additional duties on Britiſh manufactures.

This unconſtitutional argument, (which they would have laughed to ſcorn, if ever it had been uſed in oppoſition to the many duties and prohibitions the Engliſh have, from time to time, procured in favour of their own manufactures), was allowed its full force. Numerous petitions from all quarters were lodged againſt the bill; and the intereſts of two great parts of the empire were ſacrificed to that of a few merchants, already grown rich and opulent at the expence of the poor of their country; and thus it muſt ever be in a competition, where Ireland and Scotland enter the liſts with England, till the wiſdom of adminiſtration ſhall perceive this object in a different point of view, and adopt the happy policy of preferring a general good to the intereſt of a few individuals.

FINIS.

FINIS.